Bipolar Disorder More Common than Expected Among Hospitalized Adolescents

Bipolar disorder is more common than expected in adolescents in an inpatient psychiatric setting, according to a study published in the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology*. The authors, who are clinicians at Bradley Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island, assessed a total of 391 consecutive admissions to the psychiatric inpatient unit, using a mania rating scale derived from the Kiddie Schedule for Affective Disorders and Schizophrenia (K-SADS), as well as other history from both parents and adolescents. The researchers discovered that manic symptoms such as severe irritability, impulsivity, depression, and hypersexuality are frequently found in hospitalized adolescents. Of the 391 patients surveyed, 20% were diagnosed with juvenile bipolar disorder, which contradicts the past thought of mental health professionals that only approximately 1% of adolescents have bipolar disorder.

In addition, the authors found that, compared to patients admitted for depression alone, bipolar patients were more suicidal and aggressive, consequently requiring higher levels of care. More than 50% of the patients diagnosed with juvenile bipolar disorder were admitted during a depressive episode.


Valuable Resource for Drug Interactions

A new, free Web site (http://www.geneMedrx.com) provides valuable information, including warnings of adverse drug reactions, to people taking prescription medications. Sponsored by Geneplex Corporation, the program also checks for potential negative interactions with certain foods, over-the-counter medications, natural remedies, and negative genetic predispositions to hundreds of commonly prescribed medications. To use the program, consumers or clinicians highlight and input medications, dietary information, and the results of DNA drug-related testing, if available. (For more information about pharmacogenetics, see the two-part Psychopharmacology articles on page 13 of this issue and in the January issue [Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 13-16].) The program then displays information and warnings about adverse interactions, including red-flag warnings and printable fact sheets.

Testosterone Improves Quality of Life for Men with Alzheimer’s

Testosterone significantly improved mood, behavior, and psychological health in patients with mild Alzheimer’s disease, according to a study published in *Archives of Neurology*. Neuroscientists at the UCLA Alzheimer Disease Research Center conducted a double-blind, placebo-controlled study and used caregiver assessments to evaluate quality of life for patients with Alzheimer’s disease.

The 24-week study included 16 male patients with mild Alzheimer’s disease and 22 healthy male control...
participants, and each group was randomly divided into two treatment subsections. One group received daily testosterone treatments via hydroalcoholic gel (75 mg), while the other received a gel with no active medication. The researchers then assessed:

- Cognitive functioning.
- Neuropsychiatric symptoms.
- Global functioning.
- Quality of life.

A quality-of-life scale encompassed areas such as memory, interpersonal relationships, physical health, energy, living situation, and overall well-being. The group treated with testosterone improved significantly more than those who received placebo in scores on the caregiver version of the quality-of-life scale. However, researchers noted no significant differences in memory or other cognitive skills, as assessed by clinician-administered tests.

**Crackheads Gone Wild: An Uncensored, Unflinching Look at Drug Abuse**

To address the growing epidemic of crack and its effects on the lives, families, and communities of those using the drug, XTREEME Films, L.L.C. has produced Crackheads Gone Wild. The controversial, uncensored documentary stunningly and graphically depicts actual users and the lengths to which they will go to sustain their addictions. The 55-minute documentary, while containing humorous anecdotes, is a serious assessment of the rampant use of this inexpensive but highly addictive drug.

The documentary shows the destructive nature of crack cocaine through the eyes of actual users from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Uncensored and censored (suitable for educational use) versions are available for $19.99 by contacting the FMG/ Glenn Group via e-mail at mharveyglenn@yahoo.com. For more information, access the Web site at http://www.crackheadsgonewild.com.

**Hold that Prescription Pad! Older Antipsychotic Agent May NOT Be as Cost Effective**

In November, JPN reported that expensive new atypical antipsychotic agents are neither more effective nor safer than an older, less expensive drug. However, a recent study published in Value in Health indicates that requiring people with schizophrenia to first fail treatment with older, less expensive antipsychotic agents before allowing them to switch to Zyprexa® (olanzapine) may not result in overall cost savings. Data indicated that despite Zyprexa's higher cost, the difference in total cost over one year between Zyprexa as first-line treatment and conventional antipsychotic agents as initial treatment was small. In addition, findings indicated that any savings were offset by the increased cost of other services associated with treatment, including hospitalizations, crisis interventions, and emergency room visits.

The study of cost effectiveness was designed to compare the clinical and social efficacy and total direct costs of treatment of different antipsychotic agents. Attempts to contain high treatment costs for severe mental illnesses have led to cost-cutting efforts that include restricting access to more-expensive antipsychotic agents, such as preferred drug lists, prior authorization requirements, and “fail-first” treatment algorithms, in which failure on a less-expensive medication is required before costs for more expensive medication are covered.

The researchers also compared the costs associated with Zyprexa to those of Risperdal® (risperidone) as initial treatment for schizophrenia and found the total costs are similar.


**ADT WellHealth Monitors Your Health Even When You Don’t**

ADT Security Services, Inc., known for its in-home security systems, has introduced a new line of health monitoring services, ADT® WellHealth™ solutions. These medical devices aim to make the home the “center of care,” by providing easy-to-use digital devices that connect patients to ADT’s Customer Monitoring Centers and, if necessary, nurses, pharmacists, and other health care professionals. The new line of services includes three categories to address various needs:

- ADT MediHealth™, which monitors adherence related to medications and other health issues.
- ADT VitalHealth™, which tracks vital signs to record and report health data that could signal a need for help.
- ADT ManageHealth™, which chronicles health behaviors to encourage a wellness-oriented lifestyle.

The services strive to help people remain independent in their homes longer and reduce preventable hospital care, which will help reduce medical costs for individuals and employers, as well as private and government health insurers. All the products include the ability to call for help, if needed, at any time.


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**Shadow Voices Carries Hope Through Faith**

The Mennonite Media Association, as a presentation of the National Council of Churches, has produced a new documentary, Shadow Voices: Finding Hope in Mental Illness. The documentary discusses the need for faith communities to play a greater role in eliminating stigma and providing support for treatment and recovery related to mental illness. For more information, including a complete list of television stations scheduled to air this program and information about ordering VHS and DVD copies, access the Web site at http://www.shadowvoices.com.

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**Brains of Marijuana Smokers, People With Schizophrenia Show Similarities**

Heavy marijuana use may put adolescents who are genetically predisposed to schizophrenia at greater risk for developing the disorder, according to research presented at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America. Researchers used a sophisticated brain imaging technique called diffusion tensor imaging, which detects and measures the motion of water molecules in the brain to reveal microscopic abnormalities, to study the brains of three groups of adolescents: one healthy, non-drug-using group; one group that had smoked marijuana daily for at least 1 year; and patients with schizophrenia.

By examining the arcuate fasciculus, a bundle of fibers connecting to Broca’s area in the left frontal lobe and Wernicke’s area in the left temporal lobe of the brain, researchers found that repeated exposure to marijuana was related to abnormalities in the development of this fiber pathway, which is associated with higher aspects of language and auditory functions. The scans revealed no abnormal developmental changes in the language pathway in healthy adolescents, but showed abnormalities in both marijuana users and patients with schizophrenia. Co-principal investigator Sanjiv Kumra, MD, noted:

> These findings suggest that, in addition to interfering with normal brain development, heavy marijuana use in adolescents may also lead to an earlier onset of schizophrenia in individuals who are genetically predisposed to the disorder.